KOSOVO



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- While formal accession to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) is not currently possible for Kosovo, as it is not yet recognised as a State by the depository to the Convention, Kosovo should submit a letter to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General stating that it intends to fully comply, on a voluntary basis, with the APMBC.
- Kosovo should review its decision not to submit a voluntary Article 7 report on an annual basis, and instead report on progress in line with its Mine Action Strategy for 2019–2024.
- The Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC) should seek to complete clearance by the end of 2024, in line with the objectives in its latest five-year strategy.
- As and where necessary, evidence-based survey should be conducted to confirm the presence of mines before embarking on full clearance of mined areas.
- KMAC and international mine action operators should increase their collaboration to seek additional funding and greater financial stability for mine action.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Kosovo is contaminated by mines, cluster munition remnants (CMR), and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), primarily as a result of the conflict between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the late 1990s, and between Yugoslavia and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member states in 1999.¹ At the end of 2020, 32 confirmed mined areas remained, covering almost 1.25km². This is a decrease on the 1.36km² of mined area, across 35 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), reported at the end of 2019.² Remaining contamination includes four CHAs totalling 425,000m², which contain a mix of mines and CMR.³

One CHA of 15,000m² of previously unknown anti-personnel mine contamination was discovered and added to the database in 2020. The new CHA, which contains legacy contamination, was reported to KMAC by the local population. The HALO Trust reported that KMAC discovered two new mined areas in 2020, both in the municipality of Hani Elezit within the Ferizaj region. The newly discovered areas are at Dremnjak and Neçavc, covering an estimated area of 20,000m² and 14,700m², respectively. It is not clear whether the CHA reported to KMAC is included in those reported by HALO.

The last detailed survey of contamination in Kosovo was in 2013, in the course of which The HALO Trust and KMAC systematically conducted community surveys across most of the province and confirmed 130 hazardous areas: 79 mined areas covering an estimated 2.76km² and 51 cluster munition strikes covering an estimated 7.63km².6

KMAC believes the current baseline of contamination to be reasonably accurate, evidence-based, and complete, but said there may still be reports by locals in the future of previously unknown areas suspected to be contaminated by mines.⁷ The baseline of mine contamination at the end of 2019 cannot be reconciled with the baseline, survey, and clearance

data reported by KMAC at the end of 2020. The discrepancy could be attributed to differences in reported figures for cancellation by non-technical survey.⁸

The HALO Trust also believes that Kosovo's current baseline reflects a relatively accurate picture of the remaining contamination but suggests that it would benefit from a critical review and further assessment of the 2013 survey data. This would inform future targeting of survey and clearance, with a view to completing land release by the target date of 2024. To conduct the review, HALO Trust was planning to deploy two non-technical survey teams throughout 2021 and conduct re-survey on 57 planned future tasks.⁹

Both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines were used during the conflict, in fixed-pattern minefields as well as more randomly in "nuisance" minefields. Many anti-personnel mines had minimal metal content. 10 Although the total number of mines emplaced during the conflict is not known, the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC) reported, as at 31 May 2000, that a total of 7,232 mines had been cleared in the preceding year (3,448 anti-personnel mines and 3,784 anti-vehicle mines). 11 The UN claimed in 2002 that "the problems associated with landmines, cluster munitions and other items of unexploded ordnance [UXO] in Kosovo have been virtually eliminated", 12 but further investigation revealed that considerably more contamination remained to be addressed than had been indicated. 13

In addition to contamination from mines, Kosovo is contaminated with CMR (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Kosovo for further information) as well as other ERW. Kosovo Protection Force (KFOR) and Kosovo Security Force (KSF) explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams regularly dispose of ERW in response to information provided by the public and demining organisations.¹⁴

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In January 2011, the EOD Coordination Management Section became KMAC, responsible for managing survey and clearance of mines and ERW throughout Kosovo. KMAC prepares an annual work plan in cooperation with international demining non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and coordinates their operations along with the national demining teams of the KSF. It also coordinates survey, quality assurance, risk education, public information, and victim assistance activities. KMAC's role and responsibilities as head of the national mine action programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence were established and institutionalised by Kosovo's 2012 Law on Humanitarian Demining.

Kosovo's mine action programme is fully nationally owned, with a strong, longstanding commitment from the government, and benefits from a dedicated team of permanent national staff.¹⁷ In 2020, KMAC had five staff: a Director, a Senior Quality Assurance (QA) Officer, a QA Inspector, a Mine Risk Education (MRE) Officer, and a Public Information Officer.¹⁸

NGO operators in Kosovo report having a constructive and proactive working relationship with KMAC. HALO Trust staff meet with the director of KMAC for monthly coordination meetings, 19 and, in addition, KMAC's QA officers visit HALO Trust on a quarterly basis to discuss operations planning, along with conducting unannounced weekly field visits to HALO tasks. 20

In 2020, the Kosovo government provided €990,000 in financial support to KMAC, and to the KSF for mine and ERW clearance. Kosovo's mine action strategy for 2019–24 sets out the objective of intensifying resource mobilisation efforts in order to gain greater financial stability. While a specific resource mobilisation strategy does not exist, operators reported that coordinated approaches with KMAC were made to potential donors such as the United States and the European Union. In 2020, HALO Trust was able to secure 12-month funding for anti-personnel mine clearance from the Swiss government with the support of KMAC.

In 2019, KMAC had identified funding and logistical support as the two primary areas where it could most benefit from assistance from international donors and mine action operators.²⁵

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 reflects the commitment of the mine action programme to ensure that gender is considered in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of all mine action projects, with a view to promoting equality and quality. The Strategy stipulates that all mine action activities and assistance must reflect the needs of different ages and gender in a targeted and non-discriminatory manner, and that mine action and community liaison data are also to be collected and systematically disaggregated according to sex and age. The summing that the summing th

Both KMAC and KSF have gender policies in place. KMAC reported that the KSF's gender policy aims to facilitate the consultation of all groups affected by mines and ERW, expressly women and children. Within KMAC, one of its five staff (the Risk Education Officer) is a woman. A total of 5% of KSF staff employed in operational mine action roles were women, but none is in a managerial or supervisory position.²⁸

Kosovo's mine action strategy recognises the barriers that exist against equal employment in Kosovo society, including significant differences in employment levels between men and women, despite the number of men and women of working age being broadly similar. The Strategy notes that, as at 2019, more than four-fifths of women of working age were not employed in Kosovo's labour market, and less than one in eight has been employed annually over the past five years. The primary reasons given for female unemployment are child- and family-care obligations, which traditionally in Kosovo society fall on women.

The Strategy notes the efforts of mine action operators to overcome these challenges and barriers to employment, such as through childcare and parental leave, and gender-sensitive recruitment practices that encourage women to apply for positions traditionally seen as jobs for men. It further recalls the importance of employment of not only multi-gender, but also multi-ethnic survey and clearance teams, and the

particular benefits of recruitment in areas affected by high unemployment and poor socio-economic conditions.²⁹

In 2018, The HALO Trust developed a gender policy in consultation with the Kosovo Women's Network, an advocacy network of more than 140 member organisations, including women's organisations of all ethnic backgrounds from throughout Kosovo, which was adopted in February. The policy aims both at increasing the recruitment of women, as well as retention of existing female employees.30 In 2019, HALO further developed this policy to include provision for increased family leave and child-care allowances for those taking care of children, in order to remove barriers to women's employment. Through the Dutch Government, HALO Trust contracted the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP, a part of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, GICHD) to conduct gender sensitivity and leadership training in July 2019 to more than 20 managers across HALO globally, with a view to addressing issues of unconscious bias and lack of inclusion.31

In HALO Trust's Kosovo programme, 17% of employees are women, including in 14% of operational roles in survey and clearance teams, although no women were in operational management positions in 2020.³² HALO also ensures that community liaison teams are gender balanced and include senior personnel fluent in relevant languages, to ensure that community liaison activities are inclusive of ethnic minorities.³³

HALO Trust is committed to increasing the number of women in the organisation generally and specifically in management roles. While this proved difficult in 2020 as there were no job openings, HALO was extending recruitment opportunities in 2021 thanks to newly secured funding.³⁴ In September 2020, HALO conducted a training to promote Assistant Team Leaders, the training led to the appointment of two female assistance Team Leaders for the first time in 2020. HALO

Trust planned to conduct a similar training in 2021, which it sees as an opportunity to recruit additional female staff in operational management.³⁵ Relevant mine action data are disaggregated by gender and age, and data collected post-clearance are also disaggregated to ensure the understanding and analysis of impact of mine action activities takes gender into consideration.³⁶

According to KMAC, Kosovo's baseline of anti-personnel mine contamination has been established through inclusive consultation with women, girls, boys, and men, including, where relevant, from minority groups.³⁷

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

KMAC uses the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation version for its national mine action database. Data are disaggregated between mines, CMR, and other ERW.³⁸ Operators were positive in their assessments of the quality and accessibility of data in the database and of KMAC's information management system in general. Operators report to KMAC on a weekly basis.³⁹ The land release data reported to Mine Action Review by clearance operators and the KMAC were largely aligned. This is an improvement compared to previous years' reports, which typically contained numerous discrepancies.

According to its most recent mine action strategy, KMAC intended, as a means to show its commitment to the APMBC, to submit voluntary Article 7 transparency reports on an annual basis.⁴⁰ In disappointing news, KMAC subsequently advised Mine Action Review that Kosovo would only start submitting Article 7 reports when it becomes a member of the UN.⁴¹

PLANNING AND TASKING

The GICHD supported the development of Kosovo's new Mine Action Strategy for 2019–24, bringing together a wide range of national and international stakeholders in a strategy stakeholder workshop in Pristina in October 2018. The strategy, formally approved in January 2019 and launched by the Ministry of Kosovo Security Services on 4 April 2019, has three goals:

- Mine/ERW threats managed and reduced
- Communication and awareness raising
- Management of residual contamination.

The strategy declares that all known mined and CMR-contaminated areas will be addressed by the end of 2024, leaving only residual contamination to be managed accordingly. It contains annual projections for anti-personnel mine clearance, including:

- all high priority anti-personnel mine tasks (8 as at October 2018) will be cleared by the end of 2020
- all medium-priority anti-personnel mine tasks (25 as at October 2018) will be cleared by 2022
- all low-priority anti-personnel mine tasks (15 as at October 2018) will be completed by 2024.⁴²

Updates on clearance progress of high and medium priority areas were not made available, but as at May 2021, HALO Trust was clearing two medium priority tasks.⁴³

The strategy is explicitly based on a number of assumptions, including that the necessary funding will be secured and that

no new mined or CMR-contaminated areas are identified. It notes, however, that "so far each year 3–4 different affected areas have been reported" and that should this trend continue, capacity and progress will need to be reassessed with regards to the 2024 deadline.⁴⁴

As per the strategy, KMAC will develop annual operational work plans to implement the strategy's goals. ⁴⁵ KMAC will also request an external mid-term review of the strategy in 2022 to evaluate progress and make any adaptations according to contextual changes if required. ⁴⁶

In 2019, KMAC confirmed that it had developed annual operational work plans to target anti-personnel mined areas, according to impact-based criteria, including risk reduction, development priorities, and poverty reduction, along with the findings of a nationwide baseline socio-economic impact assessment carried out in 2018 by KMAC, with the support of The HALO Trust.⁴⁷ In 2020, KMAC planned that clearance would start on nine mined areas⁴⁸ but this was delayed for three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁹ The mine action strategy for 2019–24 is also said to align with the objectives of Kosovo's National Development Strategy 2016–2021.⁵⁰

In 2019, The HALO Trust developed a new prioritisation system that considers the "community profile" for a task. This system draws on several factors, such as socio-economic status, planned land use, government development plans, and demographics. All information is collected from government and public data as well as from extensive community survey.⁵¹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

National mine action standards for land release are in place in Kosovo, which, according to KMAC, reflect the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).⁵²

A 2014 evaluation of Kosovo's mine action programme, conducted on behalf of the International Trust Fund (ITF) Enhancing Human Security, concluded that increased capacity and improvements to land release methodology and equipment would be necessary for Kosovo to complete clearance by 2024. Since the 2014 evaluation, significant improvements have been made to the mine action programme, including the introduction of HSTAMID detectors by The HALO Trust, which have enhanced operational productivity.⁵³

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2020, Kosovo's national mine action programme's capacity consisted of two international operators, The HALO Trust and the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and a national operator, the KSF. However, NPA did not conduct survey or clearance of anti-personnel mined area in 2020, solely focusing instead on CMR.⁵⁴ The demining season is from the end of March to the end of November, due to weather conditions.⁵⁵

HALO Trust's operational personnel are cross-trained for mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) and can move readily between these activities. On average, in 2020 The HALO Trust deployed 24 deminers across three teams to mine clearance tasks. This is half of the capacity HALO deployed in the previous year. HALO explains that the decrease comes in coincide with the ending of contract with donors in 2019 and the resultant reduction in funding. ⁵⁶ As at May 2021, HALO had decreased the number of demining teams to one. The team will operate until the funding ends in October 2021, after which HALO will only have funds available for BAC. In April 2021, HALO established two non-technical survey teams that will continue operating into 2022. ⁵⁷

By the end of December 2020, HALO had completed desk review of all known tasks to date with the support and coordination of KMAC.⁵⁸

KSF operated two manual clearance teams in 2020, totalling 20 deminers, and expected capacity to remain the same in 2021. FOR supports the KSF and Kosovo Police with EOD response tasks and organising mine and ERW demolitions in Mitrovica and the north of Kosovo. FOR SECTION 10 April 1981 (1992) April 1982 (1992) Apri

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2020

A total of 0.18km² of mined areas was released in 2020: 0.14km² through clearance and the remainder reduced through technical survey.

One CHA of $15,000\text{m}^2$ of previously unknown anti-personnel mine contamination was discovered and added to the database in $2020.^{61}$ The HALO Trust reported that KMAC discovered two new mined areas in 2020 of a total estimated area of $34,700\text{m}^2.^{62}$ It is not clear whether the CHA reported by KMAC is included in these reported by HALO.

SURVEY IN 2020

There was no land cancellation through non-technical survey by any of the operators in 2020.

A total of 44,751m² was reduced through technical survey by The HALO Trust in 2020. This is a significant decrease compared to the 92,761m² that was reduced by HALO in 2019. The decrease is attributed to the drop in funds combined with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teams deployment.⁶³

Table 1: Reduction through technical survey in 202064

District	Operator	Area reduced (m²)
Ferizaj	HALO Trust	31,629
Gjakova	HALO Trust	13,122
Total		44,751

CLEARANCE IN 2020

In 2020, a total area of almost 0.14km² of anti-personnel mined area was cleared, with seven anti-personnel mines and two items of UXO found and destroyed (see Table 2).65 This was a significant decrease in the area cleared compared to 2019, when almost 0.27km² of anti-personnel mined area was cleared, with 21 anti-personnel mines found and destroyed.66

Table 2: Mine clearance in 202067

District	Operator	Area cleared (m²)	Anti-personnel mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Ferizaj	HALO Trust	68,575	4	0
Gjakova	HALO Trust	23,300	0	0
Gjakova	KSF	35,844	0	1
Hani I Elezit	KSF	11,888	3	1
Total		139,607	7	2

A further five anti-personnel mines were destroyed by the KSF in EOD response tasks in 2020. As Kosovo has strict national procedures for the management of explosives, the KSF, with support from KFOR in northern Kosovo, carries out the destruction of mines, CMR, and other ERW found by The HALO Trust and NPA.

Compared to the previous year, in 2020, The HALO Trust saw a decrease of mine clearance productivity by some 41.5% based on its own data, as a result of reducing team numbers due to reduced funding in addition to the impact of COVID-19 on team deployment.⁷⁰

KMAC reported that three tasks were cleared by The HALO Trust in 2020 in which no anti-personnel mines were found: one in Ferizaj and two in Gjakova.⁷¹ HALO Trust reported an additional ongoing task in Gjakova being cleared where no anti-personnel mines had been found as at May 2021.⁷²

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Kosovo cannot formally adhere to the APMBC and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 5. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines as soon as possible.

As stated in Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24, which aims to complete mine and cluster munition clearance by the end of 2024, this will only be achievable if sustained funding is secured. Specific concerns are elaborated in the strategy about the need to upgrade old equipment, including vehicles to proceed without unnecessary stand-downs or costly repairs. 4

As at April 2021, KMAC reported that it still expects to clear all known mined areas by the end of 2024.⁷⁵ However, only 1km² of anti-personnel mined area has been cleared in the last five years (see Table 3). HALO is currently conducting non-technical survey and will have a better idea of the remaining contamination by the end of 2021. HALO would require increased capacity to complete mine clearance by the end of 2024 as the funding commitment, as at April 2021, was insufficient.⁷⁶ HALO also highlighted the need for a review of the current data on mined areas, including an evaluation of survey polygons, and application of efficient land release methodologies, in order to ensure coordinated and cost-effective targeting of clearance.⁷⁷

The coordinated mobilisation efforts in 2020 yielded additional funds and translated into increased capacities of HALO Trust in 2020–21. This capacity needs to be further increased and sustained over the strategy period in order to meet the 2024 target date.⁷⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly impacted Kosovo's mine action programme. From mid-March to mid-May 2020, the entire mine action sector was closed at the direction

of KMAC, as the government implemented strict lockdown measures across the country, resulting in lost productivity. Operators were able to partially phase back operations in early May and fully by June 2020.⁷⁹

Despite operators working at full capacity during the second half of 2020, the pandemic continued to weigh on the operation. Some of the challenges reported by HALO Trust included running on a winter schedule, which meant that teams worked an hour less each day; the increased breaks for handwashing (to prevent the spread of COVID-19) led to a reduction of working time; the need to isolate teams for up to two weeks when suspected cases occurred; and the fleet issues due to social distancing requirements.⁸⁰

Assuming the target is met, completion of mine clearance in 2024 would be 25 years after the end of the conflict between the FRY forces and NATO and more than 20 years after the UN claimed that clearance was largely complete.

Table 3: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km²)
2020	0.14
2019	0.27
2018	0.22
2017	0.23
2016	0.15
Total	1.01

PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

According to Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24, a separate national strategy on the management of residual contamination will be developed by KMAC by 2023, in collaboration with other national actors. This will clarify roles and responsibilities in order to manage what is expected to be a long-term residual contamination problem.⁸¹

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- 28 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 28 April 2021.
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- 34 Email from Megan Dwyer, HALO Trust, 23 April 2021.
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